

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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////// **PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE** /////

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TO: Hospital-based and other health care providers
FROM: Fred Schwartz, MD, Public Health Officer, Marin County
RE: Enhanced surveillance for Avian Influenza

Dear Hospital Based and other Health Care Providers:

Given the avian influenza situations in Vietnam, Japan, and South Korea, recommendations for enhanced surveillance are described below. The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) plans to forward these recommendations to hospitals. I will also forward the related CDC Health Alert.

AVIAN INFLUENZA:

Besides SARS, there have been reports of avian influenza (primarily A H5N1) affecting thousands of chicken in Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam since October 2003, possibly causing 14 hospitalized human cases, including 12 deaths (11 children and 1 parent) in Vietnam. H5N1 has been confirmed in 3 of the cases thus far (WHO website: http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_14/en/, http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_13/en/). While additional investigations are ongoing, **we recommend that any patient hospitalized for influenza or unexplained severe respiratory illness, ARDS or pneumonia be asked about travel to Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam in the 10 days before illness onset.** If there is a history of travel to these countries in the 10 days before onset of symptoms, then appropriate specimens should be collected for testing including **viral culture** of nasopharyngeal and throat swabs. All influenza viruses should be typed and subtyped, and any viruses that cannot be subtyped should be submitted to the Marin HHS Public Health Laboratory (which can then forward to the State VRDL) for further characterization.

Please see the CDHS website for more information

(<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/VRDL/html/FLU/Flu-h5n1.htm>) about surveillance for influenza A H5N1 and the WHO website for updates on H5N1 activity (http://www.who.int/health_topics/influenza/en/). Additional surveillance activities may be recommended as more information becomes known.